



Mental health impact for adolescents living with prolonged drought

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: A 2004 study showed adolescents living in rural Australia were aware of the impact of drought on self, family and community, but did not report levels of emotional distress higher than adolescents of similar age and gender in the Australian community. It was proposed that the rural lifestyle had helped adolescents build resilience for managing this environmental adversity. **OBJECTIVE:** To re-sample adolescents from the same rural area and determine if this resilience remained after ongoing drought three years later. **DESIGN:** A mixed methods approach using focus groups and a self-report questionnaire. **SETTING:** Government Central Schools within the Riverina region of New South Wales. **PARTICIPANTS:** Male and female adolescents (n Euro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin) 111) aged 11-17 years completed the self-report questionnaires, while some adolescents (n Euro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin) 61) within this group also participated in focus groups. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURE:** The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and a Drought and Community Survey for Children comprised the self-report survey. **RESULTS:** Adolescents reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress than those in the previous study ($t(191)$ Euro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin) 2.80, $P < 0.01$) and 12% of adolescents scored in the clinical caseness range. Thematic analysis showed consistency with the previous study as well as new themes of grief, loss and the impacts of global climate change. **CONCLUSIONS:** Results indicate a reporting of lesser well-being than was reported by a comparable group of young people four years earlier. A preventative intervention with a focus on family and community is recommended to address the mental health of adolescents enduring a chronic environmental adversity such as drought.

Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2009.01107.x>

Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

Extreme Weather Event: Drought

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Rural

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Mood Disorder, Stress Disorder

Intervention:

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Medical Community Engagement:

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience:

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content